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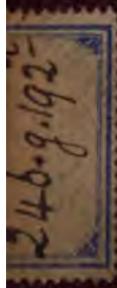
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ST MARK'S REST

FIRST SUPPLEMENT.

THE SHRINE OF THE SLAVES.

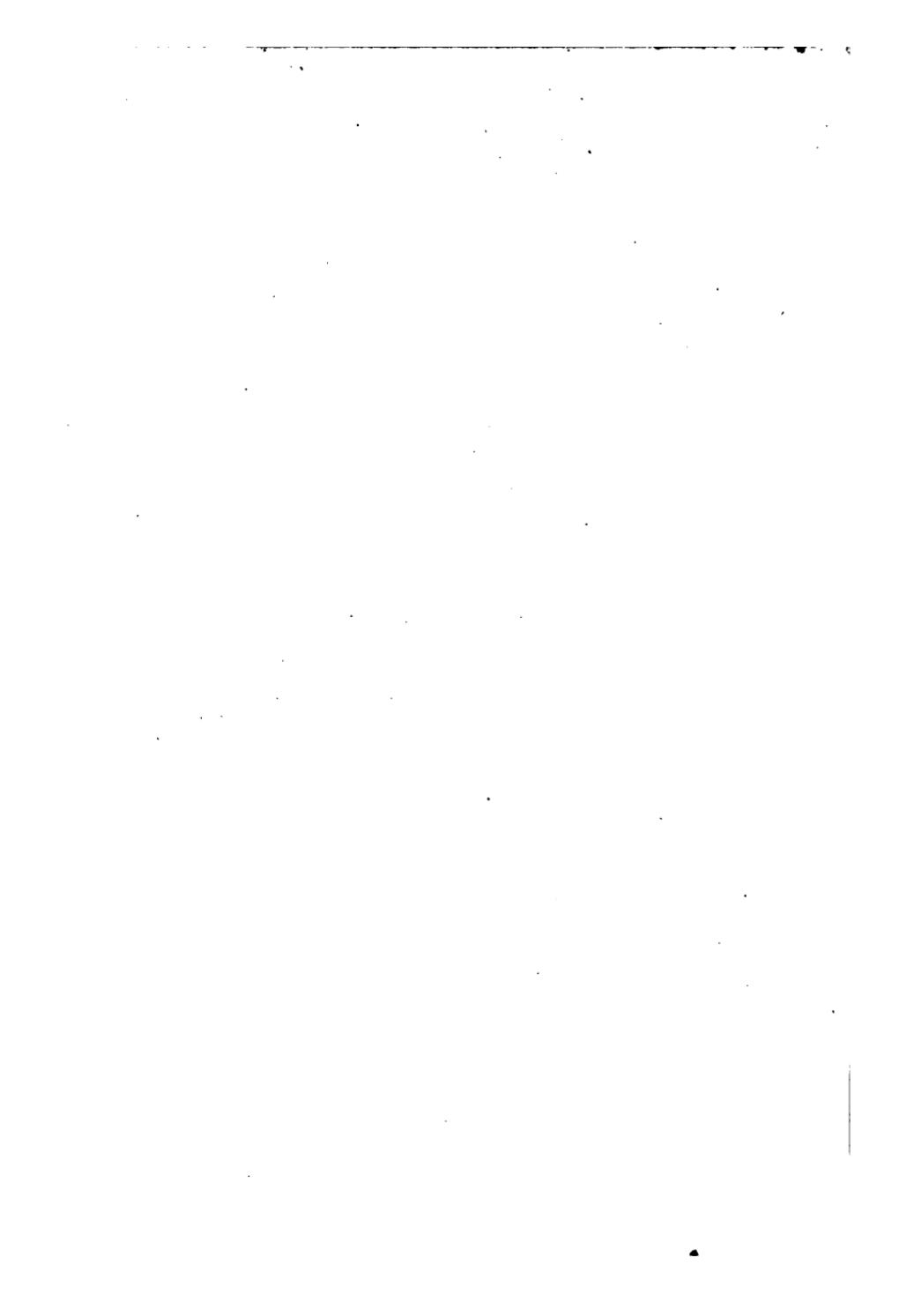


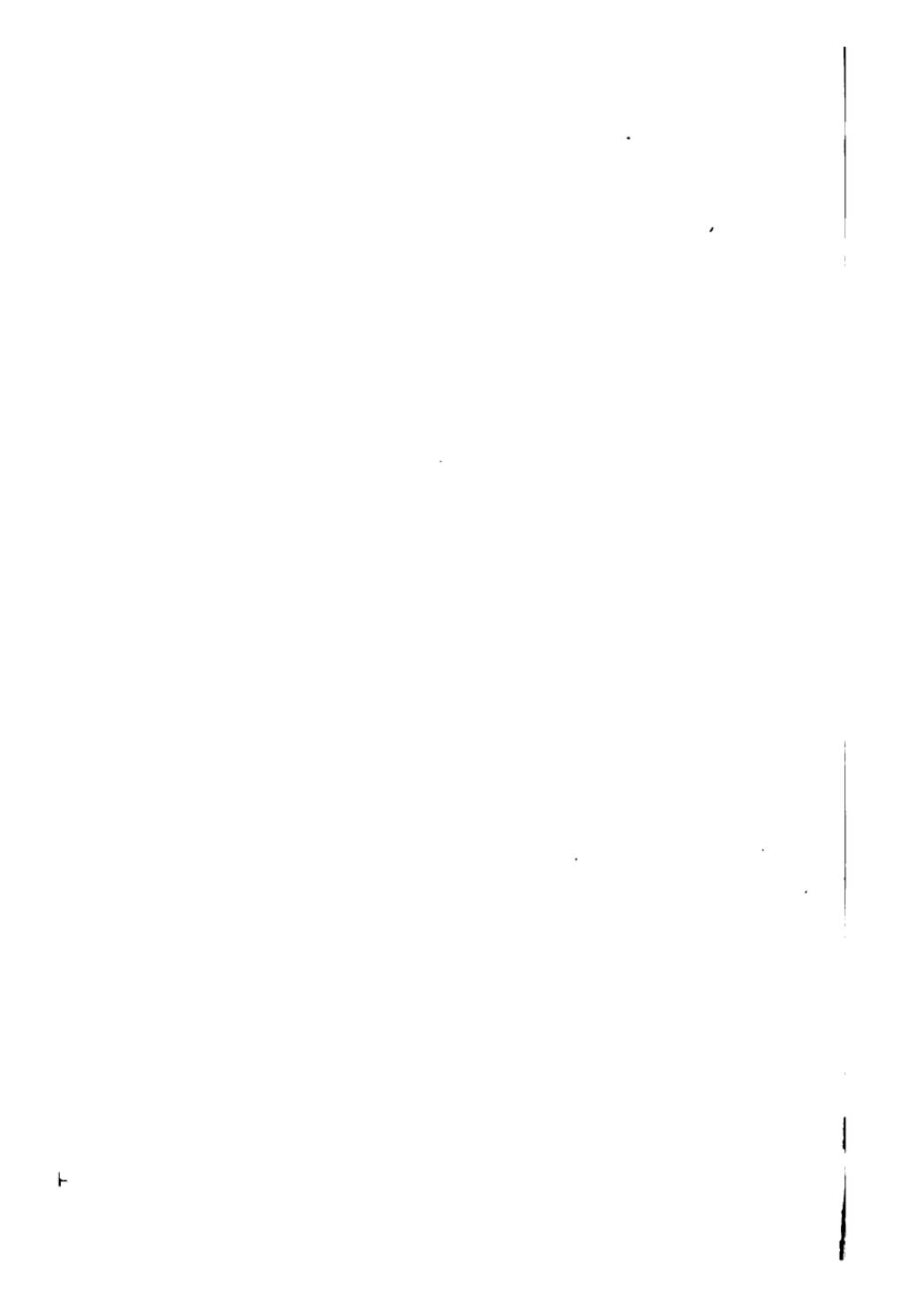
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ST. MARK'S REST.

FIRST SUPPLEMENT.

THE SHRINE OF THE SLAVES.

BEING A GUIDE TO THE PRINCIPAL PICTURES BY

VICTOR CARPACCIO

IN VENICE.

BY

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GEORGE ALLEN,
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P R E F A C E.

THE following (too imperfect) account of the pictures by Carpaccio in the chapel of San Giorgio de' Schiavoni, is properly a supplement to the part of 'St Mark's Rest' in which I propose to examine the religious mind of Venice in the fifteenth century: but I publish these notes prematurely that they may the sooner become helpful, according to their power, to the English traveller.

The second supplement, which is already in the press, will contain the analysis by my fellow-worker, Mr. James Reddie Anderson, of the mythological purport of the pictures here

described. I separate Mr. Anderson's work thus distinctly from my own, that he may have the entire credit of it; but the reader will soon perceive that it is altogether necessary, both for the completion and the proof of my tentative statements; and that without the certificate of his scholarly investigation, it would have been lost time to prolong the account of my own conjectures or impressions.

THE SHRINE OF THE SLAVES.

COUNTING the canals which, entering the city from the open lagoon, must be crossed as you walk from the Piazzetta towards the Public Gardens, the fourth, called the 'Rio della Pietà' from the unfinished church of the Pietà, facing the quay before you reach it, will presently, if you go down it in gondola, and pass the Campo di S. Antonin, permit your landing at some steps on the right, in front of a little chapel of indescribable architecture, chiefly made up of foolish spiral flourishes, which yet, by their careful execution and shallow mouldings, are seen to belong to a time of refined temper. Over its door are two bas-reliefs. That of St. Catherine leaning on her wheel seems to me anterior in date to the other, and is very lovely: the second is contemporary with the cinque-cento building, and fine also; but notable chiefly for the conception of the dragon as a creature formidable rather by its gluttony than its malice, and degraded beneath the level of all other spirits of

prey; its wings having wasted away into mere paddles or flappers, having in them no faculty or memory of flight; its throat stretched into the flaccidity of a sack, its tail swollen into a molluscous encumbrance, like an enormous worm; and the human head beneath its paw symbolizing therefore the subjection of the human nature to the most brutal desires.

When I came to Venice last year, it was with resolute purpose of finding out everything that could be known of the circumstances which led to the building, and determined the style, of this chapel—or, more strictly, sacred hall—of the School of the Schiavoni. But day after day the task was delayed by some more pressing subject of enquiry; and, at this moment—resolved at last to put what notes I have on the contents of it at once together,—I find myself reduced to copy, without any additional illustration, the statement of Flaminio Corner.*

“In the year 1451, some charitable men of the Illyrian or Sclavonic nation, many of whom were sailors, moved by praiseworthy compassion, in that they saw many of their fellow-countrymen, though deserving well of the republic, perish miserably, either of hard life or hunger, nor have enough to pay the expenses of church burial, determined to establish a charitable brotherhood under the invocation of the holy martyrs St. George and St.

* ‘Notizie Storiche,’ Venice, 1758, p. 167.

Trifon—brotherhood whose pledge was to succour poor sailors, and others of their nation, in their grave need, whether by reason of sickness or old age, and to conduct their bodies, after death, religiously to burial. Which design was approved by the Council of Ten, in a decree dated 19th May, 1451; after which, they obtained from the pity of the Prior of the Monastery of St. John of Jerusalem, Lorenzo Marcello, the convenience of a hospice in the buildings of the Priory, with rooms such as were needful for their meetings ; and the privilege of building an altar in the church, under the title of St. George and Trifon, the martyrs ; with the adjudgment of an annual rent of four zecchins, two loaves, and a pound of wax, to be offered to the Priory on the feast of St. George. Such were the beginnings of the brotherhood, called that of St. George of the Sclavonians.

“ Towards the close of the fifteenth century, the old hospice being ruinous, the fraternity took counsel to raise from the foundations a more splendid new one, under the title of the Martyr St. George, which was brought to completion, with its façade of marble, in the year 1501.”

The hospice granted by the pity of the Prior of St. John cannot have been very magnificent, if this little chapel be indeed much more splendid nor do I yet know what rank the school of the Sclavonians held, in power or number, among the

other minor fraternities of Venice. The relation of the national character of the Dalmatians and Illyrians, not only to Venice, but to Europe, I find to be of far more deep and curious interest than is commonly supposed ; and in the case of the Venetians, traceable back at least to the days of Herodotus; for the festival of the Brides of Venice, and its interruption by the Illyrian pirates, is one of the curious proofs of the grounds he had for naming the Venetians as one of the tribes of the Illyrians, and ascribing to them, alone among European races, the same practice as that of the Babylonians with respect to the dowries of their marriageable girls.

How it chanced that while the entire Riva,—the chief quay in Venice—was named from the Sclavonians, they were yet obliged to build their school on this narrow canal, and prided themselves on the magnificence of so small a building, I have not ascertained, nor who the builder was ;—his style, differing considerably from all the Venetian practice of the same date, by its refusal at once of purely classic forms, and of elaborate ornament, becoming insipidly grotesque, and chastely barbarous, in a quite unexampled degree, is noticeable enough, if we had not better things to notice within the unpretending doorway. Entering, we find ourselves in a little room about the size of the commercial parlour in an old-fashioned English inn ; perhaps an inch or two

higher in the ceiling, which is of good horizontal beams, narrow and many, for effect of richness ; painted and gilded, also, now tawdrily enough, but always in some such patterns as you see. At the end of the low room, is an altar, with doors on the right and left of it in the sides of the room, opening, the one into the sacristy, the other to the stairs leading to the upper chapel. All the rest mere flat wall, wainscoted two-thirds up, eight feet or so, leaving a third of the height, say four feet, claiming some kind of decent decoration. Which modest demand you perceive to be modestly supplied, by pictures, fitting that measure in height, and running long or short, as suits their subjects : ten altogether, (or with the altar-piece, eleven,) of which nine are worth your looking at.

Not as very successfully decorative work, I admit. A modern Parisian upholsterer, or clever Kensington student, would have done for you a far surpassing splendour in a few hours : all that we can say here, at the utmost, is that the place looks comfortable ; and, especially, warm, —the pictures having the effect, you will feel presently, of a soft evening sunshine on the walls, or glow from embers on some peaceful hearth, cast up into the room where one sits waiting for dear friends, in twilight.

In a little while, if you still look with general glance, yet patiently, this warmth will resolve

itself into a kind of chequering, as of an Eastern carpet, or old-fashioned English sampler, of more than usually broken and sudden variegation ; nay, suggestive here and there of a wayward patchwork, verging into grotesqueness, or even, with some touch of fantasy in masque, into harlequinade,—like a tapestry for a Christmas night in a home a thousand years old, to adorn a carol of honoured knights with honouring queens.

Thus far sentient of the piece, for all is indeed here but one,—go forward a little, please, to the second picture on the left, wherein, central, is our now accustomed friend, St. George : stiff and grotesque, even to humorousness, you will most likely think him, with his dragon in a singularly depressed and, as it were, water-logged, state. Never mind him, or the dragon, just now ; but take a good opera-glass, and look therewith steadily and long at the heads of the two princely riders on the left—the Saracen king and his daughter—he in high white turban, she beyond him in the crimson cap, high, like a castle tower.

Look well and long. For truly,—and with hard-earned and secure knowledge of such matters, I tell you, through all this round world of ours, searching what the best life of it has done of brightest in all its times and years,—you shall not find another piece quite the like of that little piece of work, for supreme, serene, un-

assuming, unfaltering sweetness of painter's perfect art. Over every other precious thing, of such things known to me, it rises, in the compass of its simplicity ; in being able to gather the perfections of the joy of extreme childhood, and the joy of a hermit's age, with the strength and sunshine of mid-life, all in one.

Which is indeed more or less true of all Carpaccio's work and mind ; but in this piece you have it set in close jewellery, radiant, inestimable.

Extreme joy of childhood, I say. No little lady in her first red shoes,—no soldier's baby seeing himself in the glass beneath his father's helmet, is happier in laugh than Carpaccio, as he heaps and heaps his Sultan's snowy crest, and crowns his pretty lady with her ruby tower. No desert hermit is more temperate ; no ambassador on perilous policy more subtle ; no preacher of first Christian gospel to a primitive race more earnest or tender. The wonderfullest of Venetian Harlequins this,—variegated, like Geryon, to the innermost mind of him—to the lightest gleam of his pencil : “ Con più color, sommessa e soprapposte ; non fur mai drappi Tartari ne Turchi ; ” and all for good.

Of course you will not believe me at first,—nor, indeed, till you have unwoven many a fibre of his silk and gold. I had no idea of the make of it myself, till this last year, when I happily had beguiled to Venice one of my best young Oxford

men, eager as myself to understand this historic tapestry, and finer fingered than I, who once getting hold of the fringes of it, has followed them thread by thread through all the gleaming damask, and read it clear ; whose account of the real meaning of all these pictures you shall have presently in full.

But first, we will go round the room to know what is here to read, and take inventory of our treasures ; and I will tell you only the little I made out myself, which is all that, without more hard work than can be got through to-day, you are likely either to see in them, or believe of them.

First, on the left, then; St. George and the Dragon—combatant both, to the best of their powers ; perfect each in their natures of dragon and knight. No dragon that I know of, pictured among mortal worms ; no knight I know of, pictured in immortal chivalry, so perfect, each in his kind, as these two. What else is visible on the battle-ground, of living creature,—frog, newt, or viper,—no less admirable in their kind. The small black viper, central, I have painted carefully for the schools of Oxford as a Natural History study, such as Oxford schools prefer. St. George, for my own satisfaction, also as well as I could, in the year 1872 ; and hope to get him some day better done, for an example to Sheffield in iron-armour, and several other things.

Picture second, the one I first took you to see, is of the Dragon led into the market-place of the Sultan's capital—submissive : the piece of St. George's spear, which has gone through the back of his head, being used as a bridle: but the creature indeed now little needing one, being otherwise subdued enough; an entirely collapsed and confounded dragon, all his bones dissolved away; prince and people gazing as he returns to his dust.

Picture third, on the left side of the altar.*

The Sultan and his daughter are baptized by St. George.

Triumphant festival of baptism, as at the new birthday of two kingly spirits. Trumpets and shawms high in resounding transport; yet something of comic no less than rapturous in the piece; a beautiful scarlet—‘parrot’ (must we call him?) conspicuously mumbling at a violet flower under the steps; him also—finding him the scarlest and mumblingest parrot I had ever seen—I tried to paint in 1872 for the Natural History Schools of Oxford—perhaps a new species, or extinct old one, to immortalize Carpaccio’s name and mine. When all the imaginative arts shall be known no more, perhaps, in Darwinian Museum, this scarlet “Epops Carpaccii” may preserve our fame.

* The intermediate oblong on the lateral wall is not Carpaccio’s, and is good for nothing.

But the quaintest thing of all is St. George's own attitude in baptizing. He has taken a good platterful of water to pour on the Sultan's head. The font of inlaid bronze below is quite flat, and the splash is likely to be spreading. St. George—carefullest of saints, it seems, in the smallest matters—is holding his mantle back well out of the way. I suppose, really and truly, the instinctive action would have been this, pouring at the same time so that the splash might be towards himself, and not over the Sultan.

With its head close to St. George's foot, you see a sharp-eared white dog, with a red collar round his neck. Not a greyhound, by any means; but an awkward animal; stupid-looking, and not much like a saint's dog. Nor is it in the least interested in the baptism, which a saint's dog would certainly have been. The mumbling parrot, and he—what *can* they have to do with the proceedings? A very comic picture!

But this next,—for a piece of sacred art, what can we say of it?

St. Tryphonius and the Basilisk—was ever so simple a saint, ever so absurd a beast? as if the absurdity of all heraldic beasts that ever were, had been hatched into one perfect absurdity—prancing there on the steps of the throne, self-satisfied;—*this* the beast whose glance is mortal! And little St. Tryphonius, with nothing remarkable about

him more than is in every good little boy, for all I can see.

And the worst of it is that I don't happen to know anything about St. Tryphonius, whom I mix up a little with Trophonius, and his cave; also I am not very clear about the difference between basilisks and cockatrices; and on the whole find myself reduced, in this picture, to admiring the carpets with the crosses on them hung out of the window, which, if you will examine with opera-glass, you will be convinced, I think, that nobody can do the like of them by rules, at Kensington; and that if you really care to have carpets as good as they can be, you must get somebody to design them who can draw saints and basilisks too.

Note, also, the group under the loggia which the staircase leads up to, high on the left. It is a picture in itself; far more lovely as a composition than the finest Titian or Veronese, simple and pleasant this as the summer air, and lucent as morning cloud.

On the other side also there are wonderful things, only there's a black figure there that frightens me; I can't make it out at all; and would rather go on to the next picture, please.

Stay—I forgot the arabesque on the steps, with the living plants taking part in the ornament, like voices chanting here and there a note, as some pretty tune follows its melodious way, on constant

instruments. Nature and art at play with each other—graceful and gay alike, yet all the while conscious that they are at play round the steps of a throne, and under the paws of a basilisk.

The fifth picture is in the darkest recess of all the room ; and of darkest theme,—the Agony in the garden. I have never seen it rightly, nor need you pause at it, unless to note the extreme naturalness of the action in the sleeping figures—their dresses drawn tight under them as they have turned, restlessly. But the principal figure is hopelessly invisible.

The sixth picture is of the calling of Matthew ; visible, this, in a bright day, and worth waiting for one, to see it in, through any stress of weather.

For, indeed, the Gospel which the publican wrote for us, with its perfect Sermon on the Mount, and mostly more harmonious and gentle fulness, in places where St. Luke is formal, St. John mysterious, and St. Mark brief,—this Gospel, according to St. Matthew, I should think, if we had to choose one out of all the books in the Bible for a prison or desert friend, would be the one we should keep.

And we do not enough think how much that leaving the receipt of custom meant, as a sign of the man's nature, who was to leave us such a notable piece of literature.

Yet observe, Carpaccio does not mean to

express the fact, or anything like the fact, of the literal calling of Matthew. What the actual character of the publicans of Jerusalem was at that time, in its general aspect, its admitted degradation, and yet power of believing, with the harlot, what the masters and the mothers in Israel could not believe, it is not his purpose to teach you. This call from receipt of custom, he takes for the symbol of the universal call to leave all that we have, and are doing. "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." For the other calls were easily obeyed in comparison of this. To leave one's often empty nets and nightly toil on sea, and become fishers of men, probably you might find pescatori enough on the Riva there, within a hundred paces of you, who would take the chance at once, if any gentle person offered it them. James and Jude—Christ's cousins—no thanks to them for following Him; their own home conceivably no richer than His. Thomas and Philip, I suppose, somewhat thoughtful persons on spiritual matters, questioning of them long since; going out to hear St. John preach, and to see whom he had seen. But *this* man, busy in the place of business—engaged in the interests of foreign governments—thinking no more of an Israelite Messiah than Mr. Goschen, but only of Egyptian finance, and the like—suddenly the Messiah, passing by, says "Follow me!" and he rises up, gives Him his hand,

"Yea! to the death;" and absconds from his desk in that electric manner on the instant, leaving his cash-box unlocked, and his books for whoso list to balance!—a very remarkable kind of person indeed, it seems to me.

Carpaccio takes him, as I said, for a type of such sacrifice at its best. Everything (observe in passing) is here given you of the best. Dragon deadliest—knight purest—parrot scarlestest—basilisk absurdest—publican publicanest;—a perfect type of the life spent in taxing one's neighbour, exacting duties, per-centages, profits in general, in a due and virtuous manner.

For do not think Christ would have called a bad or corrupt publican—much less that a bad or corrupt publican would have obeyed the call. Your modern English evangelical doctrine that Christ has a special liking for the souls of rascals is the absurdest basilisk of a doctrine that ever pranced on judgment steps. That which is *lost* He comes to save,—yes; but not that which is defiantly going the way He has forbidden. He showed you plainly enough what kind of publican He would call, having chosen two, both of the best: "Behold, Lord, if I have taken anything from any man, I restore it fourfold!"—a beautiful manner of trade. Carpaccio knows well that there were no defalcations from Levi's chest—no oppressions in his tax-gathering. This whom he has painted is a true merchant of Venice,

uprightest and gentlest of the merchant race ; yet with a glorious pride in him. What merchant but one of Venice would have ventured to take Christ's hand, as his friend's—as one man takes another's ? Not repentant, he, of anything he has done ; not crushed or terrified by Christ's call ; but rejoicing in it, as meaning Christ's praise and love. "Come up higher then, for there are nobler treasures than these to count, and a nobler King than this to render account to. Thou hast been faithful over a few things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

A lovely picture, in every sense and power of painting ; natural, and graceful, and quiet, and pathetic ;—divinely religious, yet as decorative and dainty as a bank of violets in spring!

But the next picture ! How was ever such a thing allowed to be put in a church ? Nothing surely could be more perfect in comic art. St. Jerome, forsooth, introducing his novice lion to monastic life, with the resulting effect on the vulgar monastic mind.

Do not imagine for an instant that Carpaccio does not see the jest in all this, as well as you do,—perhaps even a little better. "Ask for him to-morrow, indeed, and you shall find him a grave man ;" but, to-day, Mercutio himself is not more fanciful, nor Shakespeare himself more gay in his fancy of "the gentle beast and of a good conscience," than here the painter as he drew his

delicately smiling lion with his head on one side like a Perugino's saint, and his left paw raised, partly to show the thorn wound, partly in depreciation,—

“For if I should, as lion, come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity of my life.”

The flying monks are scarcely at first intelligible but as white and blue oblique masses; and there was much debate between Mr. Murray and me, as he sketched the picture for the Sheffield Museum, whether the actions of flight were indeed well given or not; he maintaining that the monks were really running like Olympic archers, and that the fine drawing was only lost under the quartering of the dresses;—I on the contrary believe that Carpaccio had failed, having no gift for representing swift motion. We are probably both right; I doubt not that the running action, if Mr. Murray says so, is rightly drawn; but at this time, every Venetian painter had been trained to represent only slow and dignified motion, and not till fifty years later, under classic influence, came the floating and rushing force of Veronese and Tintoret.

And I am confirmed in this impression by the figure of the stag in the distance, which does not run freely, and by the imperfect gallop of St. George's horse in the first subject.

But there are many deeper questions respecting

this St. Jerome subject than those of artistic skill. The picture is a jest indeed ; but is it a jest only ? Is the tradition itself a jest ? or only by our own fault, and perhaps Carpaccio's, do we make it so ?

In the first place, then, you will please to remember, as I have often told you, Carpaccio is not answerable for himself in this matter. He begins to think of his subject, intending, doubtless, to execute it quite seriously. But his mind no sooner fastens on it than the vision of it comes to him as a jest, and he is forced to paint it. Forced by the fates,—dealing with the fate of Venice and Christendom. We must ask of Atropos, not of Carpaccio, why this picture makes us laugh ; and why the tradition it records has become to us a dream and a scorn. No day of my life passes now to its sunset, without leaving me more doubtful of all our cherished contempts, and more earnest to discover what root there was for the stories of good men, which are now the mocker's treasure.

And I want to read a good "Life of St. Jerome." And if I go to Mr. Ongaria's I shall find, I suppose, the autobiography of George Sand, and the life of—Mr. Sterling, perhaps ; and Mr. Werner, written by my own master, and which indeed I've read, but forgot now who either Mr. Sterling or Mr. Werner were ; and perhaps, in religious literature, the life of Mr. Wilberforce and of Mrs. Fry ; but not the smallest scrap of informa-

tion about St. Jerome. To whom, nevertheless, all the charity of George Sand, and all the ingenuity of Mr. Sterling, and all the benevolence of Mr. Wilberforce, and a great quantity, if we knew it, of the daily comfort and peace of our own little lives every day, are verily owing; as to a lovely old pair of spiritual spectacles, without whom we never had read a word of the "Protestant Bible." It is of no use, however, to begin a life of St. Jerome now—and of little use to look at these pictures without a life of St. Jerome; but only thus much you should be clear in knowing about him, as not in the least doubtful or mythical, but wholly true, and the beginning of facts quite limitlessly important to all modern Europe—namely, that he was born of good, or at least rich family, in Dalmatia, virtually midway between the east and the west; that he made the great Eastern book, the Bible, legible in the west; that he was the first great teacher of the nobleness of ascetic scholarship and courtesy, as opposed to ascetic savageness:—the founder, properly, of the ordered cell and tended garden, where before was but the desert and the wild wood; and that he died in the monastery he had founded at Bethlehem.

It is this union of gentleness and refinement with noble continence,—this love and imagination illuminating the mountain cave into a frescoed cloister, and winning its savage beasts into do-

mestic friends, which Carpaccio has been ordered to paint for you ; which, with ceaseless exquisite-ness of fancy, he fills these three canvases with the incidents of,—meaning, as I believe, the story of all monastic life, and death, and spiritual life for evermore : the power of this great and wise and kind spirit, ruling in the perpetual future over all household scholarship ; and the help rendered by the companion souls of the lower creatures to the highest intellect and virtue of man.

And if with the last picture of St. Jerome in his study,—his happy white dog watching his face—you will mentally compare a hunting piece by Rubens, or Snyders, with the torn dogs rolled along the ground in their blood,—you may perhaps begin to feel that there is something more serious in this kaleidoscope of St. George's Chapel than you at first believed—which if you now care to follow out with me, let us think over this ludicrous subject more quietly.

What account have we here given, voluntarily or involuntarily, of monastic life, by a man of the keenest perception, living in the midst of it ? That all the monks who have caught sight of the lion should be terrified out of their wits—what a curious witness to the *timidity* of Monasticism ! Here are people professing to prefer Heaven to earth—preparing themselves for the change as the reward of all their present self-denial. And this is the way they receive the first chance of it that offers !

Evidently Carpaccio's impression of monks must be, not that they were more brave or good than other men ; but that they liked books, and gardens, and peace, and were afraid of death—therefore, retiring from the warrior's danger of chivalry somewhat selfishly and meanly. He clearly takes the knight's view of them. What he may afterwards tell us of good concerning them, will not be from a witness prejudiced in their favour. Some good he tells us, however, even here. The pleasant order in wildness of the trees ; the buildings for agricultural and religious use, set down as if in an American clearing, here and there, as the ground was got ready for them ; the perfect grace of cheerful, pure, illuminating art, filling every little cornice-cusp of the chapel with its jewel-picture of a saint,*—last, and chiefly, the perfect kindness to and fondness for, all sorts of animals. Cannot you better conceive, as you gaze upon the happy scene, what manner of men they were who first secured from noise of war the sweet nooks of meadow beside your own mountain streams at Bolton, and Fountains, Furness and Tintern ? But of the saint himself Carpaccio has all good to tell you. Common monks were, at least, harmless creatures ; but here is a strong and beneficent

* See the piece of distant monasteries in the lion picture, with its fragments of fresco on wall, its ivy-covered door, and illuminated cornice.

one. "Calm, before the Lion!" say C. C. with their usual perspicacity, as if the story were that the saint alone had courage to confront the raging beast—a Daniel in the lions' den! They might as well say of Carpaccio's Venetian beauty that she is "calm before the lapdog." The saint is leading in his new pet, as he would a lamb, and vainly expostulating with his brethren for being ridiculous. The grass on which they have dropped their books is beset with flowers; there is no sign of trouble or asceticism on the old man's face, he is evidently altogether happy, his life being complete, and the entire scene one of the ideal simplicity and security of heavenly wisdom: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

And now pass to the second picture. At first you will perhaps see principally its weak monks—looking more foolish in their sorrow than ever they did in their fear. Portraits these, evidently, every soul of them—chiefly the one in spectacles, reading the funeral service so perfunctorily,—types, throughout, of the supreme commonplace; alike in action and expression, except those quiet ones in purple on the right, and the grand old man on crutches, come to see this sight.

But St. Jerome himself in the midst of them, the eager heart of him quiet, to such uttermost quietness,—the body lying—look—absolutely flat like clay, as if it had been beat down, and clung,

clogged, all along to the marble. Earth to earth indeed. Level clay and inlaid rock now all one—and the noble head senseless as a stone, with a stone for its pillow.

There they gather and kneel about it—wondering, I think, more than pitying. To see what was yesterday the great Life in the midst of them, laid thus! But, so far as they do not wonder, they pity only, and grieve. There is no looking for his soul in the clouds,—no worship of relics here, implied even in the kneeling figures. All look down, woefully, wistfully, as into a grave. “And so Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

This is Carpaccio’s message to us. And lest you should not read it, and carelessly think that he meant only the usual commonplace of the sacredness and blessedness of the death of the righteous,—look into the narrow shadow in the corner of the house at the left hand side, where, on the strange forked and leafless tree that occupies it, are set the cross and little vessel of holy water beneath, and above, the skull, which are always the signs of St. Jerome’s place of prayer in the desert.

The lower jaw has fallen from the skull *into the vessel of holy water.*

It is but a little sign,—but you will soon know how much this painter indicates by such things, and that here he means indeed that for the

greatest, as the meanest, of the sons of Adam, death is still the sign of their sin ; and that though in Christ all shall be made alive, yet also in Adam all die ; and this return to their earth is not in itself the coming of peace, but the infliction of shame.

At the lower edge of the marble pavement is one of Carpaccio's lovely signatures, on a white scroll, held in its mouth by a tiny lizard.

And now you will be able to enter into the joy of the last picture, the life of St. Jerome in Heaven.

I had no thought, myself, of this being the meaning of such closing scene ; but the evidence for this reading of it, laid before me by my fellow-worker, Mr. Anderson, seems to me, in the concurrence of its many clauses, irresistible ; and this at least is certain, that as the opposite St. George represents the perfect Mastery of the body, in contest with the lusts of the Flesh, this of St. Jerome represents the perfect Mastery of the mind, in the fulfilment of the right desires of the Spirit : and all the arts of man,—music (a long passage of melody written clear on one of the fallen scrolls), painting (in the illuminated missal and golden alcove), and sculpture (in all the forms of furniture and the bronze work of scattered ornaments),—these—and the glad fidelity of the lower animals,—all subjected in pleasant service to the more and more perfect reading

and teaching of the Word of God ;—read, not in written pages chiefly, but with uplifted eyes by the light of Heaven itself, entering and filling the mansions of Immortality.

This interpretation of the picture is made still more probable, by the infinite pains which Carpaccio has given to the working of it. It is quite impossible to find more beautiful and right painting of detail, or more truthful tones of atmosphere and shadow affecting interior colours.

Here then are the principal heads of the symbolic evidence, abstracted for us by Mr. Anderson from his complete account of the whole series, now in preparation.

1. “The position of the picture seems to show that it sums up the whole matter. The St. George series reads from left to right. So, chronologically, the two others of St. Jerome ; but this, which should according to the story have been first, appears after the death.

2. “The figure on the altar is—most unusually—our Lord with the Resurrection-banner. The shadow of this figure falls on the wall so as to make a crest for the mitre on the altar—‘Helmet of Salvation.’ The mitre (by comparison with St. Ursula’s arrival in Rome it is a cardinal’s mitre), censer, and crosier, are laid aside.

3. “The Communion and Baptismal vessels are also laid aside under this altar, not of the dead but

of the Risen Lord. The curtain falling from the altar is drawn aside that we may notice this.

4. "In the mosaic-covered recess above the altar there is prominently inlaid the figure of a cherub or seraph 'che in Dio più l'occhio ha fisso.'

5. "Comparing the colours of the winged and four-footed parts of the 'animal binato' in the Purgatory, it is I believe important to notice that the statue of our Lord is gold, the dress of St. Jerome red and white, and over the shoulders a cape of the brown colour of earth.

6. "While candles blaze round the dead Jerome in the previous picture, the candlesticks on the altar here are empty—'they need no candle.'

7. "The two round-topped windows in line behind the square one through which St. Jerome gazes, are the ancient tables bearing the message of light, delivered 'of angels' to the faithful, but now put behind, and comparatively dim beside the glory of present and personal vision. Yet the light which comes even through the square window streams through bars like those of a prison.

"Through the body's prison bars
His soul possessed the sun and stars,"

Dante Rossetti writes of Dante Allighieri; but Carpaccio hangs the wheels of all visible heaven *inside* these bars. St. Jerome's 'possessions' are in a farther country. These bars are another way of putting what is signified by the brown cape.

8. "The two great volumes leaning against the wall by the arm-chair are the same thing, the closed testaments.

9. "The documents hanging in the little chamber behind and lying at the saint's feet, remarkable for their hanging seals, are shown by these seals to be titles to some property, or testaments ; but they are now put aside or thrown underfoot. Why, except that possession is gotten, that Christ is risen, and that 'a testament is of no strength at all while the testator liveth'? This I believe is no misuse of Paul's words, but an employment of them in their mystic sense, just as the New Testament writers quoted the Old Testament. There is a very prominent illuminated R on one of the documents under the table (I think you have written of it as Greek in its lines): I cannot but fancy it is the initial letter of 'Resurrectio.' What the music is, Caird has sent me no information about; he was to enquire of some friend who knew about old church music. The prominent bell and shell on the table puzzle me, but I am sure mean something. Is the former the mass-bell?

10. "The statuettes of Venus and the horse, and the various antique fragments on the shelf behind the arm-chair are, I think, symbols of the world, of the flesh, placed behind even the old Scripture studies. You remember Jerome's early learning, and the vision that awakened him from Pagan

thoughts (to read the laws of the True City) with the words, ‘Ubi est thesaurus tuus.’

“I have put these things down without trying to dress them into an argument, that you may judge them as one would gather them hap-hazard from the picture. Individually several of them might be weak arguments, but together I do think they are conclusive. The key-note is struck by the empty altar bearing the risen Lord. I do not think Carpaccio thought of immortality in the symbols derived from mortal life, through which the ordinary mind feels after it. Nor surely did Dante (V. esp. Par. IV. 27 and following lines). And think of the words in Canto II:—

‘Dentro dal ciel della Divina Pace
Si gira un corpo nella cui virtute
L'esser di tutto suo contento giace.’

But there is no use heaping up passages, as the sense that in using human language he merely uses mystic metaphor is continually present in Dante, and often explicitly stated. And it is surely the error of regarding these picture writings for children who live in the nursery of Time and Space, as if they were the truth itself, which can be discovered only spiritually, that leads to the inconsistencies of thought and foolish talk of even good men.

“St. Jerome, in this picture, is young and brown-haired, not bent and with long white beard, as in

the two others. I connect this with the few who have stretched their necks

*'Per tempo al pan degli angeli del quale
Vivesi qui ma non si vien satollo.'*

St. Jerome lives here by what is really the immortal bread; but shall not here be filled with it so as to hunger no more; and under his earthly cloak comprehends as little perhaps the Great Love he hungers after and is fed by, as his dog comprehends him. I am sure the dog is there with some such purpose of comparison. On that very last quoted passage of Dante, Landino's commentary (it was printed in Venice, 1491) annotates the words 'che drizzaste 'l eollo,' with a quotation,

*'Cum spectant animalia cetera terram
Os homini sublime dedit, coelum tueri jussit.'*"

I was myself brought entirely to pause of happy wonder when first my friend showed me the lessons hidden in these pictures; nor do I at all expect the reader at first to believe them. But the condition of his possible belief in them is that he approach them with a pure heart and a meek one; for this Carpaccio teaching is like the talisman of Saladin, which, dipped in pure water, made it a healing draught, but by itself seemed only a little inwoven web of silk and gold.

But to-day, that we may be able to read better to-morrow, we will leave this cell of sweet mysteries, and examine some of the painter's earlier

work, in which we may learn his way of writing more completely, and understand the degree in which his own personal character, or prejudices, or imperfections, mingle in the method of his scholarship, and colour or divert the current of his inspiration.

Therefore now, taking gondola again, you must be carried through the sea-streets to a far-away church, in the part of Venice now wholly abandoned to the poor, though a kingly saint's—St. Louis's : but there are other things in this church to be noted, besides Carpaccio, which will be useful in illustration of him ; and to see these rightly, you must compare with them things of the same kind in another church where there are no Carpaccios,—namely, St. Pantaleone, to which, being the nearer, you had better first direct your gondolier.

For the ceilings alone of these two churches, St. Pantaleone and St. Alvise, are worth a day's pilgrimage in their sorrowful lesson.

All the mischief that Paul Veronese did may be seen in the halting and hollow magnificences of them ;—all the absurdities, either of painting or piety, under afflatus of vile ambition. Roof puffed up and broken through, as it were, with breath of the fiend from below, instead of pierced by heaven's light from above ; the rags and ruins of Venetian skill, honour, and worship, exploded all together sky-high. Miracles of frantic mistake, of flauntir-

and thunderous hypocrisy,—universal lie, shouted through speaking-trumpets.

If I could let you stand for a few minutes, first under Giotto's four-square vault at Assisi, only thirty feet from the ground, the four triangles of it written with the word of God close as an illuminated missal, and then suddenly take you under these vast staggering Temples of Folly and Iniquity, you would know what to think of “modern development” thenceforth.

The roof of St. Pantaleone is, I suppose, the most curious example in Europe of the vulgar dramatic effects of painting. That of St. Alvise is little more than a caricature of the mean passion for perspective, which was the first effect of ‘science’ joining itself with art. And under it, by strange coincidence, there are also two notable pieces of plausible modern sentiment,—celebrated pieces by Tiepolo. He is virtually the beginner of Modernism: these two pictures of his are exactly like what a first-rate Parisian Academy student would do, setting himself to conceive the sentiment of Christ's flagellation, after having read unlimited quantities of George Sand and Dumas. It is well that they chance to be here: look thoroughly at them and their dramatic chiaroscuros for a little time, observing that no face is without some expression of crime or pain, and that everything is always put dark against light, or light against dark. Then return to the entrance of the church, where under the

gallery, frameless and neglected, hang eight old pictures,—bought, the story goes, at a pawn-broker's in the Giudecca for forty sous each,*—to me among the most interesting pieces of art in North Italy, for they are the only examples I know of an entirely great man's work in extreme youth. They are Carpaccio's, when he cannot have been more than eight or ten years old, and painted then half in precocious pride, and half in play. I would give anything to know their real history. "School pictures," C. C. call them! as if they were merely bad imitations, when they are the most unaccountable and unexpected pieces of absurd fancy that ever came into a boy's head, and scrawled, rather than painted, by a boy's hand,—yet, with the eternal master-touchin them already.

SUBJECTS.—1. Rachel at the Well. 2. Jacob and his Sons before Joseph. 3. Tobias and the Angel. 4. The Three Holy Children. 5. Job. 6. Moses, and Adoration of Golden Calf (C.C.). 7. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. 8. Joshua and falling Jericho.

In all these pictures the qualities of Carpaccio are already entirely pronounced; the grace, quaintness, simplicity, and deep intentness on the meaning of incidents. I don't know if the grim

* "Originally in St. Maria della Vergine" (C. C.). Why are not the documents on the authority of which thements are made given clearly?

statue in No. 4 is, as C. C. have it, the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, or that which he erected for the three holy ones to worship,—and already I forget how the 'worship of the golden calf' according to C. C., and 'Moses' according to my note, (and I believe the inscription, for most of, if not all, the subjects are inscribed with the names of the persons represented,) are relatively pourtrayed. But I have not forgotten, and beg my reader to note specially, the exquisite strangeness of the boy's rendering of the meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. One would have expected the Queen's retinue, and her spice-bearing camels, and Solomon's house and his servants, and his cup-bearers in all their glory; and instead of this, Solomon and the Queen stand at the opposite ends of a little wooden bridge over a ditch, and there is not another soul near them,—and the question seems to be which first shall set foot on it!

Now, what can we expect in the future of the man or boy who conceives his subjects, or is liable to conceive them, after this sort? There is clearly something in his head which we cannot at all make out; a ditch must be to him the Rubicon, the Euphrates, the Red Sea,—Heaven only knows what! a wooden bridge must be Rialto in embryo. This unattended King and Queen must mean the pre-eminence of uncounselled royalty, or what not; in a word, there's no saying, and no

criticizing him ; and the less, because his gift of colour and his enjoyment of all visible things around him are so intense, so instinctive, and so constant, that he is never to be thought of as a responsible person, but only as a kind of magic mirror which flashes back instantly whatever it sees beautifully arranged, but yet will flash back commonplace things often as faithfully as others.

I was especially struck with this character of his, as opposed to the grave and balanced design of Luini, when after working six months with Carpaccio, I went back to the St. Stephen at Milan, in the Monasterio Maggiore. In order to do justice to either painter, they should be alternately studied for a little while. In one respect, Luini greatly gains, and Carpaccio suffers by this trial ; for whatever is in the least flat or hard in the Venetian is felt more violently by contrast with the infinite sweetness of the Lombard's harmonies, while only by contrast with the vivacity of the Venetian can you entirely feel the depth in faintness, and the grace in quietness, of Luini's chiaroscuro. But the principal point of difference is in the command which Luini has over his thoughts, every design of his being concentrated on its main purpose with quite visible art, and all accessories that would in the least have interfered with it withdrawn in merciless asceticism ; whereas a subject under Carpaccio's hand is always just as it would or might have occurred in nature ; and

among a myriad of trivial incidents, you are left, by your own sense and sympathy, to discover the vital one.

For instance, there are two small pictures of his in the Brera gallery at Milan, which may at once be compared with the Luinis there. I find the following notice of them in my diary for 6th September, 1876:—

“Here, in the sweet air, with a whole world in ruin round me. The misery of my walk through the Brera yesterday no tongue can tell; but two curious lessons were given me by Carpaccio. The first, in his preaching of St. Stephen—Stephen up in the corner where nobody would think of him; the doctors, one in lecture throne, the rest in standing groups mostly—Stephen’s face radiant with true soul of heaven,—the doctors, not monsters of iniquity at all, but superbly true and quiet studies from the doctors of Carpaccio’s time; doctors of this world—not one with that look of heaven, but respectable to the uttermost, able, just, penetrating: a complete assembly of highly trained old Oxford men, but with more intentness. The second, the Virgin going up to the temple; and under the steps of it, a child of ten or twelve with his back to us, dressed in a parti-coloured, square-cut robe, holding a fawn in leash, at his side a rabbit; on the steps under the Virgin’s feet a bas-relief of fierce fight of men with horned monsters like rampant snails: one

with a conger-eel's body, twining round the limb of the man who strikes it."

Now both these pictures are liable to be passed almost without notice ; they scarcely claim to be compositions at all ; but the one is a confused group of portraits ; the other, a quaint piece of grotesque, apparently without any meaning, the principal feature in it, a child in a parti-coloured cloak. It is only when, with more knowledge of what we may expect from the painter, we examine both pictures carefully, that the real sense of either comes upon us. For the heavenly look on the face of Stephen is not set off with raised light, or opposed shade, or principality of place. The master trusts only to what nature herself would have trusted in—expression pure and simple. If you cannot see heaven in the boy's mind, without any turning on of the stage lights, you shall not see it at all.

There is some one else, however, whom you may see, on looking carefully enough. On the opposite side of the group of old doctors is another youth, just of Stephen's age. And as the face of Stephen is full of heavenly rapture, so that of his opposite is full of darkest wrath,—the religious wrath which all the authority of the conscience urges, instead of quenching. The old doctors hear Stephen's speech with doubtful pause of gloom ; but this youth has no patience,—no endurance for it. He will be the first to cry, *Away with him,*—

"Whosoever will cast a stone at him, let them lay their mantle at my feet."

Again—looking again and longer at the other pictures, you will first correct my mistake of writing "fawn"—discovering the creature held by the boy to be a unicorn.* Then you will at once know that the whole must be symbolic; and looking for the meaning of the unicorn, you find it signifies chastity; and then you see that the bas-relief on the steps, which the little Virgin ascends, must mean the warring of the old strengths of the world with lust: which theme you will find presently taken up also and completed by the symbols of St. George's Chapel.

If now you pass from these pictures to any of the Luini frescoes in the same gallery, you will at once recognize a total difference in conception and treatment. The thing which Luini wishes you to observe is held forth to you with direct and instant proclamation. The saint, angel, or Madonna, is made central or principal; every figure in the surrounding group is subordinate, and every accessory subdued or generalized. All the precepts of conventional art are obeyed, and the invention and originality of the master are only shown by the variety with which he adorns the commonplace,—by the unexpected grace with which he executes what all have done,—and the

* Corrected for me by Mr. C. F. Murray.

sudden freshness with which he invests what all have thought.

This external difference in the manner of the two painters is connected with a much deeper element in the constitution of their minds. To Carpaccio, whatever he has to represent must be a reality; whether a symbol or not, afterwards, is no matter, the first condition is that it shall be real. A serpent, or a bird, may perhaps mean iniquity or purity; but primarily, they must have real scales and feathers. But with Luini, everything is primarily an idea, and only realized so far as to enable you to understand what is meant. When St. Stephen stands beside Christ at His scourging, and turns to us who look on, asking with unmistakable passion, "Was ever sorrow like this sorrow?" Luini does not mean that St. Stephen really stood there; but only that the thought of the saint who first saw Christ in glory may best lead us to the thought of Christ in pain. But when Carpaccio paints St. Stephen preaching, he means to make us believe that St. Stephen really did preach, and as far as he can, to show us exactly how he did it.

And, lastly, to return to the point at which we left him. His own notion of the way things happened may be a very curious one, and the more so that it cannot be regulated even by himself, but is the result of the singular power he has of seeing things in vision as if they were

So that when, as we have seen, he paints Solomon and the Queen of Sheba standing at opposite ends of a wooden bridge over a ditch, we are not to suppose the two persons are less real to him on that account, though absurd to us ; but we are to understand that such a vision of them did indeed appear to the boy who had passed all his dawning life among wooden bridges, over ditches ; and had the habit besides of spiritualizing, or reading like a vision, whatever he saw with eyes either of the body or mind.

The delight which he had in this faculty of vision, and the industry with which he cultivated it, can only be justly estimated by close examination of the marvellous picture in the Correr Museum, representing two Venetian ladies with their pets.

In the last general statement I have made of the rank of painters, I named two pictures of John Bellini, the Madonna in San Zaccaria, and that in the sacristy of the Frari, as, so far as my knowledge went, the two best pictures in the world. In that estimate of them I of course considered as one chief element, their solemnity of purpose — as another, their unpretending simplicity. Putting aside these higher conditions, and looking only to perfection of execution and essentially artistic power of design, I rank this Carpaccio above either of them, and therefore, as in these respects, the best picture in the world.

I know no other which unites every nameable quality of painter's art in so intense a degree—breadth with minuteness, brilliancy with quietness, decision with tenderness, colour with light and shade : all that is faithfulest in Holland, fancifullest in Venice, severest in Florence, naturalest in England. Whatever de Hooghe could do in shade, Van Eyck in detail—Giorgione in mass—Titian in colour—Bewick and Landseer in animal life, is here at once ; and I know no other picture in the world which can be compared with it.

It is in tempera, however, not oil : and I must note in passing that many of the qualities which I have been in the habit of praising in Tintoret and Carpaccio, as consummate achievements in oil-painting, are, as I have found lately, either in tempera altogether, or tempera with oil above. And I am disposed to think that ultimately tempera will be found the proper material for the greater number of most delightful subjects.

The subject, in the present instance, is a simple study of animal life in all its phases. I am quite sure that this is the meaning of the picture in Carpaccio's own mind. I suppose him to have been commissioned to paint the portraits of two Venetian ladies—that he did not altogether like his models, but yet felt himself bound to do his best for them, and contrived to do what perfectly satisfied them and himself too. He has

their pretty faces and pretty shoulders, their pretty dresses and pretty jewels, their pretty ways and their pretty playmates—and what would they have more?—he himself secretly laughing at them all the time, and intending the spectators of the future to laugh for ever.

It may be, however, that I err in supposing the picture a portrait commission. It may be simply a study for practice, gathering together every kind of thing which he could get to sit to him quietly, persuading the pretty ladies to sit to him in all their finery, and to keep their pets quiet as long as they could, while yet he gave value to this new group of studies in a certain unity of satire against the vices of society in his time.

Of this satirical purpose there cannot be question for a moment, with any one who knows the general tone of the painter's mind, and the traditions among which he had been educated. In all the didactic painting of mediæval Christianity, the faultful luxury of the upper classes was symbolized by the knight with his falcon, and lady with her pet dog, both in splendid dress. This picture is only the elaboration of the well-recognized symbol of the lady with her pets; but there are two ladies—mother and daughter, I think—and six pets, a big dog, a little dog, a parroquet, a peahen, a little boy, and a china vase. The youngest of the women sits serene

in her pride, her erect head pale against the dark sky—the elder is playing with the two dogs ; the least, a white terrier, she is teaching to beg, holding him up by his fore-paws, with her left hand ; in her right is a slender riding-whip, which the larger dog has the end of in his mouth, and will not let go—his mistress also having dropped a letter,* he puts his paw on that and will not let her pick it up, looking out of gentlest eyes in arch watchfulness to see how far it will please her that he should carry the jest. Behind him the green parroquet, red-eyed, lifts its little claw as if disliking the marble pavement ; then behind the marble balustrade with gilded capitals, the bird and little boy are inlaid with glowing brown and red. Nothing of Hunt or Turner can surpass the plume-painting of the bird ; nor can Holbein surpass the precision, while he cannot equal the radiance, of the porcelain and jewellery.

To mark the satirical purpose of the whole, a pair of ladies' shoes are put in the corner, (the high-stilted shoe, being, in fact, a slipper on the top of a column,) which were the grossest and absurddest means of expressing female pride in the fifteenth and following centuries.

In this picture, then, you may discern at once how Carpaccio learned his business as a painter, and to what consummate point he learned it.†

* The painter's signature is on the supposed letter.

† Another Carpaccio, in the Correr Museum, of St. Mary

And now, if you have begun to feel the power of these minor pictures, you can return to the Academy and take up the St. Ursula series, on which, however, I find it hopeless to reduce my notes to any available form at present:—the question of the influence of this legend on Venetian life being involved with enquiries belonging properly to what I am trying to do in ‘St. Mark’s Rest.’ This only you have to observe generally, that being meant to occupy larger spaces, the St. Ursula pictures are very unequal in interest, and many portions seem to me tired work, while others are maintained by Mr. Murray to be only by the hands of scholars. This, however, I can myself assert, that I never yet began to copy or examine any portion of them without continually increasing admiration; while yet there are certain shortcomings and morbid faults throughout, unaccountable, and rendering the greater part of the work powerless for good to the general public. Taken as a connected series, the varying personality of the saint destroys its interest totally. The girl talking to her father in 539 is not the girl who dreams in 533; and the gentle little dreamer is still less like the severe, stiffly dressed, and Elizabeth, is entirely lovely, though slighter in work; and the so-called Mantegna, but more probably (according to Mr. Murray) early John Bellini,—the Transfiguration,—full of majesty and earnestness. Note the inscribed ‘talk’ with Moses and Elias,—“Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, oh ye my friends.”

and not in any supreme degree well favoured, bride, in 542 ; while the middle-aged woman, without any claim to beauty at all, who occupies the principal place in the final Gloria, cannot by any effort of imagination be connected with the figure of the young girl kneeling for the Pope's blessing in 546.

But indeed had the story been as consistently told as the accessories are perfectly painted, there would have been no occasion for me now to be lecturing on the beauties of Carpaccio. The public would long since have discovered them, and adopted him for a favourite. That precisely in the particulars which would win popular attention, the men whom it would be most profitable for the public to study should so often fail, becomes to me, as I grow older, one of those deepest mysteries of life, which I only can hope to have explained to me when my task of interpretation is ended.

But, for the sake of Christian charity, I would ask every generous Protestant to pause for a while before the meeting under the Castle of St. Angelo, (546).

" Nobody knows anything about those old things," said an English paterfamilias to some enquiring member of his family, in the hearing of my assistant, then at work on this picture. Which saying is indeed supremely true of us nationally. But without requiring us to know-

anything, this picture puts before us some certainties respecting mediæval Catholicism, which we shall do well to remember.

In the first place, you will find that all these bishops and cardinals are evidently portraits. Their faces are too varied—too quiet—too complete—to have been invented by even the mightiest invention. Carpaccio was simply taking the features of the priesthood of his time, throwing aside, doubtless, here and there, matter of offence ;—the too settled gloom of one, the evident subtlety of another, the sensuality of a third ; but finding beneath all that, what was indeed the constitutional power and pith of their minds,—in the deep of them, rightly thoughtful, tender, and humble.

There is one curious little piece of satire on the fault of the Church in making cardinals of too young persons. The third, in the row of four behind St. Ursula, is a mere boy, very beautiful, but utterly careless of what is going on, and evidently no more fit to be a cardinal than a young calf would be. The stiffness of his white dress, standing up under his chin as if he had only put it on that day, draws especial attention to him.

The one opposite to him also, without this piece of white dress, seems to be a mere man of the world. But the others have all grave and refined faces. That of the Pope himself is quite exquisite in its purity, simple-heartedness, and

joyful wonder at the sight of the child kneeling at his feet, in whom he recognizes one whom he is himself to learn of, and follow.

The more I looked at this picture, the more I became wonderstruck at the way the faith of the Christian Church has been delivered to us through a series of fables, which, partly meant as such, are over-ruled into expressions of truth—but how much truth, it is only by our own virtuous life that we can know. Only remember always in criticizing such a picture, that it no more means to tell you as a fact* that St. Ursula led this long procession from the sea and knelt thus before the Pope, than Mantegna's St. Sebastian means that the saint ever stood quietly and happily, stuck full of arrows. It is as much a mythic symbol as the circles and crosses of the Carita; but only Carpaccio carries out his symbol into delighted realization, so that it begins to be absurd to us in the perceived impossibility. But it only signifies the essential truth of joy in the Holy Ghost filling the whole body of the Christian Church with visible inspiration, sometimes in old men, sometimes in children; yet never breaking the laws of established authority and subordination—the greater saint blessed by the lesser, when the lesser is in the higher place of authority, and all the common and

* If it *had* been a fact, of course he would have liked it all the better, as in the picture of St. Stephen; but though only an idea, it must be realized to the full.

natural glories and delights of the world made holy by its influence : field, and earth, and mountain, and sea, and bright maiden's grace, and old men's quietness,—all in one music of moving peace—the very procession of them in their multitude like a chanted hymn—the purple standards drooping in the light air that yet can lift St. George's gonfalon ;* and the angel Michael alighting—himself seen in vision instead of his statue—on the Angel's tower, sheathing his sword.

What I have to say respecting the picture that closes the series, the martyrdom and funeral, is partly saddening, partly depreciatory, and shall be reserved for another place. The picture itself has been more injured and repainted than any other (the face of the recumbent figure entirely so) ; and though it is full of marvellous passages, I hope that the general traveller will seal his memory of Carpaccio in the picture last described.

* It is especially to be noted with Carpaccio, and perhaps more in this than any other of the series, that he represents the beauty of religion always in animating the present world, and never gives the charm to the clear far-away sky which is so constant in Florentine sacred pictures.





